California Black Bear Fact Sheet

- 1) The only species of bears in California are black bears. However, they range in color from blonde to black, with cinnamon brown being the most common color.
- 2) Male bears are called "boars," female bears are "sows," and young bears are "cubs." A group of bears is called a "sleuth" or "sloth" of bears.
- 3) Bears can weigh up to 500 pounds, although average weight is about 300 pounds.
- 4) Black bears can sprint up to 35 mph. They are strong swimmers and great tree climbers.
- 5) There are an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 black bears in California.
- 6) Bears are found mainly in mountainous areas above 3,000 feet, where there is diverse vegetation and an abundance of seasonal fruits, berries, and nuts. Trees are essential for bears because they provide food and escape from predators.
- 7) Black bears are omnivores and will eat whatever seems edible. Mostly they are plant eaters, but they have been reported catching and consuming young deer fawns. A typical wild bear diet consists of berries, plants, nuts, roots, honey, honeycomb, insects, larvae, carrion and small mammals.
- 8) Bears frequently adapt to human presence, often because bears are attracted to human garbage, pet food and other food items. In suburban areas and mountain communities, bears may damage private property while foraging.
- 9) As winter approaches, bears will forage for food up to 20 hours a day, storing enough fat to sustain them through the winter. Bears then enter into a period of inactivity similar to hibernation. In southern California, where winters are mild, bears may den as late as January, and sometimes not at all.
- 10) Bears generally breed every other year and produce two to four cubs. The young are born in early February while the sow is denning and they emerge with the sow in April or May. Cubs follow their mother learning everything she does, including how and where to find food. Some cubs remain with the sow for up to two years, but they can be independent as early as 6 months of age.

For more information on California's black bears visit http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/hunting/bear/biology.html